

Central and Northern Spain, May-June 1976

By H. G. PHELPS*

When I had the pleasure of inspecting Lt. Col. Manley's fine collection of Spanish butterflies, I much admired his series of *Lysandra bellargus* Rott., particularly ssp. *alfacariensis* Ribbe which is a large race with particularly well-marked females. *Plebejus hesperica* Rambur is another interesting butterfly well represented in the collection. In the hope of obtaining specimens of these butterflies and also with the possibility of capturing *Iolana iolas* Och., I decided on a May-June visit to Spain in 1976.

Arriving with my car at Bilbao on the Swedish-Lloyd ferry ship S.S. Patricia on 15th May in a drizzle of rain, I took the coast road towards Santander. At Torrelavega I struck inland to Reinosa where I took the road south over the Puerto de Pozazal where I hoped to find *Zerynthia rumina* L. A cold wind was blowing over the pass and there were no butterflies on the wing. It was good however to be back in the lush countryside of Northern Spain, and my spirits rose at the sight of a hen harrier gliding low over the road. I later spotted two storks following a plough and picking up titbits turned up by the ploughshares. After negotiating the busy city of Burgos, I camped in a wood near Salas de los Infantes and lay awake to a late hour listening to nightingales and grasshopper warblers. This is a district rich in bird life and in the early morning other warblers joined in the chorus.

The next day the weather warmed up and in a flowery field on the other side of Salas I found *Aricia morronensis* Ribbe, *Polyommatus icarus* Rott., *Philotes baton* Berg., *Melitaea cinxia* L., and *Anthocharis cardamines* L. Further on towards Soria a clearing in pinewoods near Hontoria del Pinar produced *Boloria dia* L. and several *Everes argiades* Pall.

The village of Abejar was reached in the evening. It was apparent that this was a late season as the scrub oak was still in bud, and in this usually prolific area, butterflies were scarce. The following day in a field purple with masses of pasque flowers (*Pulsatilla vulgaris*), the following species were observed: *Clossiana euphrosyne* L., *Cyaniris semiargus* Rott., *Hamearis lucina* L., and a single specimen of *Heodes tityrus* Poda.

After lunch at Abejar I travelled on to Medinaceli and beyond the town I camped in a rough field just off the busy Madrid road. Here I was pleased to find a few fresh specimens of *Glaucopsyche alexis* Poda flying over a lush growth of bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*). A fine warm morning saw me on the road at an early hour. I left the Madrid road at Alcala de Henares and made for Arganda where I obtained a room at the only hotel in this busy small town. The proprietor's daughter is married to a young Englishman from

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Blandford, Dorset, who kindly took me on a tour of the local bars.

During the evening I telephoned Dr. Gómez Bustillo of Madrid who is the co-author with Prof. Fernández Rubio of two books on Spanish butterflies. He kindly agreed to meet me the following morning at the village of Loeches for a day's collecting. He promised to show me a secret habitat of *I. iolas* which sounded very interesting. The doctor turned up in the morning with two charming lady companions all with nets. We went to a hillside where several bushes of bladder senna (*Colutea arborescens*) were growing. This is the foodplant of *I. iolas*. The ova are laid on the pods and the larvae feed on the seeds. It was a great thrill to see specimens of this fine blue coming to the bushes. I obtained several males and two females all in good condition. This race has been given the name *fidelis* Gómez Bustillo. A few *L. bellargus* ssp. *aidae* were also flying and I caught several females which have large orange submarginal spots and in some cases blue markings on the upperside. The habitat is a rather arid hillside with spiny plants and an occasional clump of horseshoe vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*), rather different from an English chalk down. I also took specimens of *P. hesperica* ssp. *matildae* Gómez Bustillo—another butterfly I had come a long way to see. This species was uncommon and only found near the foodplant—*Astragalus*. Other species on the wing were *Melanargia ines* Hoff., *M. psyche* Hbn., *Euphydryas desfontainii* God., *Melitaea phoebe* D. & S., *Pontia daplidice* Hbn., *Melitaea didyma* Esp., *Pyronia bathseba* Fab., and *G. alexis*. After our enjoyable morning's collecting, Dr. Bustillo kindly entertained me to a fine meal at a local restaurant.

During the next four days I collected in the area of Arganda, Loeches and Campo Real in glorious weather. While exploring a cornfield which appeared to have been abandoned to flowering weeds, I was pleased to see *Zegris eupheme* Esp., and I caught several specimens of this beautiful fast-flying butterfly in fair condition. *Euchloe ausonia* Hbn. was also present with a few *P. daplidice*. In the same area I saw several worn specimens of *Z. rumina*. A notable capture one afternoon was a *L. bellargus* f. *ceronus*—a fine violet blue female. On 27th May, while collecting near Loeches, another collector turned out to be Prof. Fidel Rubio, the co-author with Dr. Bustillo of the books on Spanish butterflies, taking a few hours off from his work at Madrid Hospital. We had a little chat and he kindly invited me to accompany him to another locality. We spent an enjoyable morning collecting and talking about butterflies.

On 28th May I left Arganda and went via Chinchon to Aranjuez. Leaving this town I took the wrong road and finished up on a dirt track over the moor through which an almost dried-up river wound its way. Stopping the car to examine some marbled whites I disturbed a colony of black-winged stilts. They appeared to have eggs or young as they

flew around me presenting a curious sight with their long pink legs extending well beyond their tails.

I eventually reached the main road and was soon driving through the beautiful and historic city of Toledo. Taking the Torrijos road I had a meal in that small town and reached the village of La Mata in the afternoon. This is the district where Col. Manley and Mrs. Manley collected *P. hesperica* ssp. *galani agenjo* in 1968. Col. Manley had advised me to contact Dr. Galán Martín who discovered the race in 1960. I eventually found the doctor who was lamenting a flat car battery. He was pleased to accept my offer to drive him into Torrijos for another battery, and on our return he kindly showed me the *P. hesperica* site. This consists of two uncultivated hillsides in an area cultivated with vines, olives and corn. That evening I camped in the shade of some wild olive trees by the side of a mule track. A soft chorus of turtle doves could be heard in this peaceful spot, and at dusk I heard the plaintive cry of a stone curlew.

It rained hard all night and prospects did not look very bright in the morning. Although it was still cloudy in the afternoon I decided to have a walk over the *P. hesperica* site. I soon found the foodplant which is a fine tall-growing species of *Astragalus* and which was in full bloom with large yellow flowers. Tapping the plants lightly with my net I disturbed several *P. hesperica* and caught two or three specimens in fair condition, although it was obvious that I was a bit late for this race. Here again the butterfly was never far from its foodplant and could now appreciate its Spanish name of "Nina del astrágalo".

The following day was hot and sunny and I was able to explore the local hills. Several specimens of *P. hesperica* were taken but I did not find them at all common. A few *P. bellargus* were also flying, and like Col. Manley I took several *obsoleta* forms. I also potted up some females on horseshoe vetch (*H. comosa*). Eggs were laid and the butterflies emerged in September after my return. There were no aberrations except one female of the *ceronus* form. It is possible that the frequent recurrence of aberrations at La Mata may be the result of environmental influences.

The bird life was interesting at La Mata. I disturbed a hawk-like bird from a tree and later identified it from my bird book as a great spotted cuckoo. Several hoopoes and one great grey shrike were also seen.

On 1st June I drove eastwards through some rather uninteresting country through Ocana, Tarancon and Cuenca to Una. Beyond this small town I found some good butterfly country where *Papilio machaon* L., *Z. rumina*, *C. semiargus* and *Plebicula dorylas* D. & S. were flying in good numbers. I camped that evening near Tragacete and it was a delight to hear nightingales singing in a thicket of blackthorn. The following day I collected along the banks of the River Valdemeca and found this a pleasant spot where in the heat of the

day I was able to have a refreshing dip in the clear water. Species caught here included *Erebia triaria* de Prunner ssp. *noguerae* Manley and *Euphydras aurinia* Rott. ssp. *beckeri* Ledr.

On 2nd June I took the Teruel road out of Tragacete which necessitated a rather tortuous climb over the Puerto del Cubillo. At the summit it was much colder and there was not much flying except fresh *E. triaria* and a few *P. bellargus*. As I drove along forestry roads further into the Montes Universales, the weather became overcast and put an end to collecting for that day. I spent my coldest night in Spain near Bronchales camping in a wood carpeted with miniature daffodils.

In cold windy weather I drove to Albarracin. In the gorges near the town it became warmer and I stopped at a field of sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*) and caught several fresh *Plebicula thersites* Cantener. After shopping in the town, I took the Teruel road and about three miles from the town explored the rocky hills on the north side of the road in my search for *P. hesperica*. I eventually found the foodplant—a rather inconspicuous species of yellow *Astragalus* growing amongst clumps of blue-flowered flax (*Linum narbonense* L.) and other spiny and aromatic plants. Here it probably was that Sheldon found the butterfly in 1913 and he described his delight in discovering this desired species (*Entomologist*, 46: 311).

The following day (5th June) I drove to Moscardon in the Sierra de Albarracin. Later on in July this district, which is well-known to collectors, is alive with butterflies but at this early date only a few *E. triaria* and *Coenonympha iphioides* Stdgr. were on the wing. I returned to Albarracin for the afternoon and found several more *P. hesperica* in the same area as before. A fairly common species here was *Cupido sebrus* Hbn. During the afternoon a large blue butterfly flew swiftly up the hill, and I was delighted to know that *I. iolas* was in the vicinity. The next day I had a long climb over the rocky hills east of Albarracin in very hot conditions and had another sighting of *I. iolas*. This time three flew overhead in line astern but unfortunately out of reach of my net!

On 7th June I explored the hills to the west of Albarracin. *Anthocharis euphenoides* Stdgr. was flying here and I took two females which I have never found to be common in Spain. An interesting species to turn up here in small numbers was *Scolitandides orion* Pallas. Returning later to the other side of Albarracin I was lucky to take a male and female of *I. iolas*. This race is described as ssp. *thomasi* Hemming. In the afternoon I set off for Abejar, near Soria, and after a few stops I reached my old camp site near the village. That night I heard the lovely song of the woodlark for the first time in Spain. A fair number of butterflies were flying in the morning including *Plebejus argus* L., *C. semiargus*, *A. morronensis* and *M. phoebe*. Continuing north I stopped near S. Leonardo de Yague and found quite a big colony of *A. morronensis*

along the roadside where its foodplant Storksbill (*Erodium cheilanthifolium*) was growing in abundance.

Passing through Burgos the weather became wet and cold and I put up for the night at a hostel in the village of Sotopalacios and spent a pleasant evening in the bar with some army officers who were on manoeuvres in the district. In the morning I continued my journey north. My only capture en route worth recording was a fresh *Plebicula amandus* Schr., near the Puerto del Escudo. I eventually reached Reinosa where it appeared to be as cold as when I was there almost three weeks previously. The following day I took the secondary road to Guardo and from there a fairly good road to Riano. Before reaching that small town I collected at Alto de las Portillas where flying with a number of *P. dorylas* I caught what appears to be a hybrid between either *P. dorylas* or *P. bellargus* and *Lysandra coridon asturiensis* Sag. The upperside of this butterfly looks very much like *P. dorylas*, but has chequered fringes, while the underside is like *L. coridon asturiensis*. Passing through Riano I collected in the valley below the Esla Bridge where butterflies were quite numerous along the road verges and included *Melitaea trivialis* D. & S., *P. dorylas*, *L. bellargus* and *Celastrina argiolas* L. I was pleased to catch a fresh male and female of *Eumedonia chiron* Rott. at this spot.

On 11th June I went to a beautiful valley beyond Portilla de la Reina where a friend and I found a wealth of butterflies two years ago. Wild daffodils were still blooming in the fields and butterflies were scarce. In addition to *M. trivialis* and *Mellicta parthenoides* Kef., I saw a few skippers in the damp meadows. I do not feel sufficiently certain of the identity of the skippers that I caught there and elsewhere to include them in this record. Afterwards I returned to the Esla valley where a worn *Nymphalis antiopa* L. was taken and released. I was surprised to see two specimens of *Parnassius apollo* L. at this early date. Another surprise on the same day was the capture of two "blues" that could be specimens of *polonus* Zeller, the rare hybrid between *L. coridon asturiensis* and *L. bellargus*. That afternoon I inspected a dam that had been built and there are ominous signs that Riano will soon be flooded to form a big reservoir. Collectors who have visited the district will be sorry that such a good area will be lost for ever.

On 13th June I went to a marshy valley leading off from the Puerto Viejo road. Baron de Worms collected here in 1966 and found a plentiful supply of butterflies (*Ent. Rec.*, 78: 275-283). A few *Issoria lathonia* L. were on the wing and *Argynnis niobe* L. was beginning to emerge. I spotted a large *C. argiades* fitting about in the long grass and on netting it found I had taken a nice striated male. Deciding it was time to move on, I drove up the valley towards the Puerto de San Glorio. This is the home of *Erebia palarica* Chapman and I found a few fresh males flying with *E. triaria* near the top of the Pass. *E. aurinia* ssp. *kricheldorfii* Collier was also flying

here in a restricted area. I caught a few of each species until a heavy thunderstorm put a stop to collecting and I returned to the village of Llanaves de la Reina. In the morning the weather was fine again and I returned to the Pass. Just over the top I was pleased to find a colony of *Paleochrysophanus hippothoe* L. near a stream which trickled down the mountain on the north side of the road. I caught a few fresh specimens including some fine females. Another species flying near the summit was *Euchloe simplonia* Freyer, also newly emerged.

On 15th June I explored the lower slopes of the Pass but did not find any new species. After lunch in Potes I took the winding road through the River Deva gorge and reached the coast town of Laredo in the evening, where I stopped for the night and caught the ferry ship from Bilbao the following day.

My total of species excluding skippers was 40, not very impressive, but I was well satisfied with the results of an enjoyable trip.

Acknowledgements

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References

- Fernández-Rubio, F. and Gómez Bustillo, M. R. 1974. *Mariposas de la Península Iberia*, 2 vols.
 Manley, W. B. L. and Allcard, H. G. 1970. *A Field Guide to the Butterflies and Burnets of Spain*.

THE CONTINUING SPREAD OF THE BROAD-BORDERED BEE HAWK-MOTH (*HEMARIS FUCIFORMIS* L.) IN THE NEW FOREST. — Since Dr. Craik's report (*Ent. Rec.*, **89**: 188) of the occurrence of *fuciformis* in Ashurst in 1976, I have had a reliable report of its appearance near Lymington in that year. Also, Mr. F. Courtier saw two specimens feeding at wallflower in his garden at Denny Lodge, Lyndhurst earlier this year, and this August my cup has been filled by taking a young larva feeding on honeysuckle in my own garden. — L. W. SIGGS, Sungate, Football Green, Minstead, Lyndhurst, Hants. [This moth is subject to very marked periods of scarcity and it would be interesting to hear of any other recent reports of it, either for Hampshire or elsewhere. Until recently, *fuciformis* seems to have been at a very low level for a number of years but in 1976 it showed an appreciable increase and in that year Mr. Siggs was actually the first ever to record the occurrence in Britain of a second generation of this moth (in *Ent. Rec.*, **88**: 270), which was followed by two more reports of a second brood in 1976, by Dr. Craik (*Craik, loc. cit.*) and by Mr. Chipperfield (in *Ent. Rec.*, **89**: 249). — J.M.C.-H.]

CORRIGENDA

- On page 95 (*antea*) line 7 down, for "of" read "to".
 On page 223 (*antea*) line 19 down, delete "third".